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SUBJECT: FINLAND: 2006 ANNUAL TRAFFICKING-IN-PERSONS REPORT

REF: A. STATE 03836

[B](#). 05 HELSINKI 01277
[C](#). 05 HELSINKI 00353

[1](#). (SBU) The following responses are keyed to the checklist in ref A. Embassy Helsinki's point of contact on TIP is Political Officer David Allen Schlaefer; SchlaeferDA2@state.gov; 358-09-6162-5482 or 358-050-322-7923. The Embassy estimates that 80 hours of time were spent preparing this report.

Overview of Trafficking in Finland

[2](#). (SBU) A: Finland is a transit and destination country for trafficked men, women, and children; it is not a source country. There are no reliable estimates as to the actual incidence of TIP in Finland, and there have been no systematic studies of the phenomenon. The GoF has agreed to fund a comprehensive IOM survey of trafficking in Finland; IOM expects to begin this project in the summer of 2006. Past estimates of the incidence of TIP in Finland appear to have been inaccurate due to conflation of organized prostitution/trafficking, and to circular reporting within the GoF and the NGO community. The GoF identified 15 likely TIP victims during the reporting period; however, it is believed that the number of victims trafficked through Finland to elsewhere in Europe (and, in some cases, even the United States) may be higher. Most victims trafficked through Finland are probably women and girls destined for western Europe's commercial sex industry and come from Russia, China, and, to a lesser extent, Moldova and the Caucasus.

[3](#). (SBU) B: There is strong political will at the highest levels to combat TIP. Law enforcement officials believe trafficking patterns through Finland have changed in recent years. The Criminal Intelligence Division of Finland's National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) reports that Estonian organized crime syndicates formerly engaged in trafficking and prostitution are no longer active in these areas; however, they remain active in narcotics smuggling. Finnish officials attribute this to Estonia's entry into the EU and pending entry into the Schengen region, as well as economic development within Estonia. Overall, the number of Estonian women working as prostitutes in Finland has dramatically decreased. Russian organized crime syndicates remain active in trafficking and prostitution. Although there are no "red light" districts in Finland, there are a handful of nightclubs and casinos in larger cities such as Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere that are run by or associated with the Russian mafia. Russian women work as prostitutes inside these nightclubs. Finnish authorities and NGOs believe some of the women working in these clubs may have been trafficked; the women were aware that they were coming to Finland to work as prostitutes, but after arrival the "rules" are changed and they receive less compensation and are pressured to see more clients than anticipated. It is believed that economic coercion and exploitation of women with limited financial resources plays a larger role than physical coercion in the recruitment and retention of these women by the crime syndicates.

[4](#). (SBU) B, cont.: Despite the presence of Russian criminal organizations in Finland, the actual number of TIP victims inside the country appears low. However, Finnish police are increasingly concerned about the transit dynamic, particularly trafficking from Asia. According to police, Chinese snakehead gangs have begun to use expanded air routes to Helsinki's Vantaa Airport from Beijing, Shanghai, and Bangkok for human smuggling and trafficking. Migrants and TIP victims then change planes and fly to their destinations elsewhere in the Schengen Region. Since the travellers usually have valid visas for their onward destinations and -- even in TIP cases -- are often uncooperative when referred to secondary inspection, it is difficult for Finnish Frontier Guard and Customs officials to intercept them. More than 100 presumed smuggled migrants have been stopped at Vantaa Airport during the past year and referred to asylum and refugee processing centers. (NOTE: These migrants have an

opportunity to claim asylum before deportation proceedings). Since Finnish reception centers are "open," almost all of the referred Chinese persons subsequently disappeared from the shelters, usually within 24 hours of arrival. It is presumed that they continued on toward their destination by ferry. Ten Asians (Chinese and Thai) were intercepted at Vantaa and presumed to be TIP victims. Seven of the 10 were minors. These victims were taken into protective custody and housed in separate facilities at a government refugee reception center. After having been given an opportunity to remain at least temporarily in Finland, they chose to return to China.

15. (SBU) B, cont.: The March-April 2005 case (see ref C) of a busload of Georgian women attracted considerable attention in Finland and Georgia. The bus was intercepted at the Finnish-Russian border, and the women on board were subsequently housed at a reception center run by the Labor Ministry until their return to Georgia. The women were uncooperative with police and, although offered the opportunity to remain at least temporarily in Finland, asked to be returned immediately to Georgia. Georgian (and some Finnish) media criticized the GoF's handling of the case, accepting the women's claim that they were tourists travelling to Italy, and alleging that they would now face stigmatization and humiliation in Georgia as presumed prostitutes. Finnish officials maintain that the women were illegal migrants being smuggled to Italy to work as domestics, and that the bus in question was only the latest in a series of similar incidents in which tourist buses were used to transport both smuggled migrants and TIP victims through Finland and into the EU. Subsequent to the incident, Finnish authorities report that the "Georgian bus" phenomenon has ceased, and that the organizers and traffickers have apparently chosen to bypass Finland and attempt alternate routes into the EU.

16. (SBU) B, cont.: Labor Ministry officials are concerned about labor trafficking to Finland. The incidence of such activity is unknown, but the GoF believes that some smuggled workers in the construction industry could be exploited after arrival in Finland. The ministry has formed a special working group together with trade union officials to investigate the situation. The group's initial report is due in May 2006. The GoF also believes a smaller number of Asians may be forced to work in unacceptable conditions in restaurants and as domestic workers (employed by Asians, often with family ties to the victims). Finnish police report that investigating such cases is very difficult because of the closed nature of the small Asian community in Finland, language barriers, and the unwillingness of victims or witnesses to cooperate with Finnish authorities.

17. (SBU) C: Corruption is not a problem in Finland. Law enforcement and legal authorities suffer from some underfunding due to budget constraints.

18. (SBU) D: The GoF has an interagency TIP working group that meets regularly and monitors all aspects of the government's anti-TIP efforts. The working group is currently monitoring the implementation of the 2005 National Action Plan (NAP). The GoF releases periodic statements about its anti-TIP efforts, as well as disseminating information through multilateral organizations like the Nordic-Baltic Task Force Against Trafficking. GoF representatives brief NGO-sponsored seminars and meetings on trafficking.

Prevention -----

19. (SBU) A: The GoF acknowledges the trafficking problem and has taken proactive steps to combat it.

10. (SBU) B: The GoF's interagency working group is composed of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labor, Interior, Justice, Social Affairs, and Education, and from the Frontier Guard, Customs Service, and National Bureau for Investigation. The Labor and Interior Ministries have the lead and rotate every six months as chair. Mervi Virtanen, the Director of International Relations at the Labor Ministry, is the current chairperson.

11. (SBU) C: Within Finland, the Social Affairs Ministry has the lead on domestic prevention programs. The programs are primarily geared toward demand reduction, especially Finns who might travel abroad to engage in sex tourism. During the reporting period, posters and other media targeting clients and challenging the view that sex tourism is a "victimless" crime have been displayed at ports-of-entry, post offices, and other locations. A separate information campaign running from 2003-2006 in northern Finland aims to discourage clients and advise Russian women that they can seek help from Finnish authorities. Similar campaigns are underway in Finnish Karelia and in Oulu. The Education Ministry includes education about trafficking in its curriculum for high school

students. The GoF also funds an NGO-operated hotline for TIP and domestic violence victims.

112. (SBU) C, cont.: Finland's largest prevention projects are outside its borders, aimed at creating economic opportunities for at-risk women and girls before they are caught up in the trafficking dynamic. Projects that are currently being funded by the GoF include:

Russia:

-- Finland is a main contributor to a Nordic-Baltic Task Force Against Trafficking project in Murmansk focused on providing education, information, and economic opportunities for at-risk women.

-- In St. Petersburg, Finland has funded a 400,000 Euro ILO-IPEC (International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor) program to combat the abuse of homeless children preyed on by traffickers and sexual predators. The program runs from 2005-2007.

-- In Moscow, Finland has funded a similar 300,000 Euro ILO-IPEC program to combat the abuse of homeless children at-risk for trafficking. The program also runs from 2005-2007.

-- In Kaliningrad, Finland has funded a 151,040 Euro IOM project called "Trafficking Assessment and Counter-trafficking Capacity Building for the Kaliningrad Oblast." The aim of the project is to prepare an extensive study on human trafficking in the region and promote cooperation among local judicial, police, and NGO actors to combat TIP. The project runs through the end of 2006.

-- In Russian Karelia, Finland is currently financing an anti-TIP project parallel to the one described in para 11 on the Finnish side of the border.

Ukraine:

-- Finland is currently financing an NGO project that includes a hotline and video spots targeting TIP victims. Informational seminars were also conducted by the same project in several areas of the country, including video presentations at schools. To date, the GoF has provided 32,376 Euro for the project, operated by the "La Strada Ukraine" NGO.

Moldova:

-- In 2004, Finland provided 1 million Euro to IOM for an ongoing multi-year anti-trafficking project; the grant was the single-largest grant to an NGO in Finnish history.

-- Finland is currently financing a project by the International Helsinki Foundation (IHF) that aims to combat human trafficking through a combination of police training and education campaigns for women's rights.

Multilateral Prevention Efforts:

-- In addition to the above projects, Finland plays an active role in the anti-TIP efforts of the Nordic-Baltic Task Force Against Trafficking, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Barents Euro Arctic Council, and provides additional funding to these organization's projects.

113. (SBU) D: See response in para 12 above.

114. (SBU) F: Finland is a social welfare state where the government is expected to assume responsibility for many services that elsewhere are largely provided by NGOs. As a result, there are no NGOs exclusively working on TIP, and only a few that address it among other issues of concern to women. Finnish NGOs receive almost all of their funding from the GoF with few restrictions on their activity; however, Finnish NGOs in the past have been critical about the GoF's response to the problem. This began changing in 2004-2005 when NGOs were invited to participate in drafting the country's National Action Plan on TIP. Relations have now considerably improved. The Labor Ministry has formed a partnership with two NGOs to refer victims whenever possible from government-run shelters to NGO-run shelters. NGO representatives are also participating in police training programs on victim identification. Finn Church Aid, the Finnish Lutheran Church's assistance organization, has formed a particularly close collaborative relationship with the GoF.

115. (SBU) G: Finnish law enforcement authorities monitor immigration patterns and screen applicants at ports-of-entry for TIP victims. Given the close geographic proximity of St. Petersburg to the Finnish border, Finnish consular officers face a difficult task in screening visa applicants. Russian applicants with modest resources may still credibly claim they intend to make a short, inexpensive visit to Finland for

shopping or to visit friends, making adjudication tricky. In response, the MFA in late 2005 designed a training program to teach Finnish officers to better detect trafficking situations as well as how to follow up when TIP is suspected (rather than simply refuse the visa). The program was developed in cooperation with the Frontier Guard.

¶16. (SBU) H: See para 10 above.

¶17. (SBU) J: Finland's National Action Plan was formally adopted in April 2005. The interagency working group is responsible for its implementation. The plan calls for a victim-centered approach to TIP. NGOs were a part of the working group that drafted the plan. The NAP has been widely disseminated in Finnish society and was kicked off with a press conference by Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja. As part of the overall implementation process, each agency represented in the working group in late 2005 developed its own internal implementation plan for its areas of responsibility.

Investigation and Prosecution of Traffickers

¶18. (SBU) A: Trafficking-in-persons for both sexual exploitation and forced labor is illegal. The definition of trafficking used in the law mirrors that of the Palermo Protocol. The maximum penalty for trafficking is up to 7 years, allowing Finnish law enforcement authorities to use electronic surveillance techniques when investigating TIP cases. Trafficking of minors is considered an aggravated offense, and penalties could be higher. Related offenses such as human smuggling, kidnapping, pimping, pandering, and child rape can and have been used to prosecute traffickers. Finnish prosecutors have successfully prosecuted Finnish citizens who travelled abroad to have sex with minors (Thailand and Estonia). These laws are adequate to cover the full scope of trafficking.

¶19. (SBU) B: See para 18 above.

¶20. (SBU) C: The maximum penalty for rape is 7 years, the same as that for trafficking. An aggravated offense could carry a longer penalty.

¶21. (SBU) D: Prostitution is legal, but the sale and purchase of sex in public is illegal. The law is interpreted in such a way that brothels or other clubs with sex on premises are prohibited. There are no "red light" districts in Finland. Pimping, pandering, and organized prostitution are illegal. The laws are generally enforced in practice, and there are periodic raids on nightclubs where prostitutes are known to operate to enforce the prohibition on public commercial sex. Most "Finnish" prostitution is facilitated through the internet and takes place in hotel rooms or private apartments. Foreign prostitutes, chiefly Russian, meet their clients at nightclubs and casinos. The GoF in late 2005 introduced legislation to criminalize prostitution along the Swedish model, but it is still unclear how soon such a law might be approved by Parliament owing to opposition by feminist organizations that support legalized prostitution.

¶22. (SBU) E: According to the Prosecutor-General's Office, there were three convictions during the reporting period for offenses related to trafficking. In all three cases, prosecutors believed the essential elements of trafficking were present and initially sought trafficking convictions, but ultimately pursued related charges in order to obtain more punitive convictions quickly. All three were "transit" cases, two involving Chinese nationals and one involving a Russian national. The convicted traffickers are currently in prison in Finland. Prosecutors also attempted to bring charges against two Russians who fled the country before arrests could be made. The NBI reports that as of February, there were several ongoing investigations that could result in charges being brought against additional individuals in 2006.

¶23. (SBU) E, cont.: Finnish prosecutors are eager to use new anti-TIP laws to prosecute traffickers, but admit that they lack the training and experience to do so effectively. Most trafficking cases in Finland involve individuals transiting through the country to elsewhere in Europe. Transit-trafficking cases are difficult to prove since the victims are intercepted in "mid-stream" and have not reached their final destination. The GoF is taking steps to remedy this. A training seminar for TIP prosecutors was held in Tampere in December, and another is scheduled for May. The Embassy is also working with the Finns to increase their effectiveness. Our Legatt will accompany three FBI profilers specializing in TIP to Finland in early April for training seminars with prosecutors and law enforcement personnel on victim identification and interviewing methods, and interrogatory techniques with trafficking suspects. Our POL and PAS Sections are also working with the Prosecutor-General's Office to arrange a VOLVIS program in

early fall putting Finnish prosecutors together with experienced American counterparts.

124. (SBU) F: Trafficking to and through Finland is believed to be controlled by large Russian and Chinese organized crime syndicates. The organizers typically remain outside of Finland, although lower-level operatives may accompany victims. Travel agencies and marriage brokers are not involved. The government is not involved.

125. (SBU) G: Finland actively investigates trafficking. As part of its internal action plan, the National Bureau of Investigation formed a dedicated anti-trafficking unit. Finnish liaison officers with anti-trafficking responsibility are now stationed in Murmansk, Petrozavorsk, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Tallinn, The Hague, Lyon, Malaga, and as of April 2006, Beijing. Finland also participates in the "Nordic Cooperation Network," a network of Finnish, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic law enforcement liaison officers scattered throughout Europe, Asia, and the Middle-East. Maximum sentences for traffickers are sufficient (7 years) to allow law enforcement to use electronic surveillance techniques when investigating trafficking rings.

126. (SBU) H: See para 15 for a description of the MFA's training program for Finnish consular officers; and para 23 for a description of Justice and Interior Ministry training programs for prosecutors and law enforcement personnel. In addition, the NBI in December began an awareness and victim identification training program for police, and since April 2005 approximately 400 Frontier Guards have cycled through a victim-identification training course designed by Major Ilkaa Herranen, a 2005 anti-trafficking IV participant. Plans call for 1000 Frontier Guards to have completed the course by the end of 2006.

127. (SBU) I: The GoF cooperates with other governments in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases. Finnish officials are currently involved in several regional investigations, and in 2004-2005 played a major role in breaking up a regional Baltic trafficking ring that led to successful prosecutions in Latvia (including a Finn, who also faces additional charges in Finland when he is released from jail in Latvia).

128. (SBU) J: Finland will extradite persons charged with trafficking to any country with which it has an extradition treaty. Finland will extradite its own nationals on a case by case basis to other countries with which it has an extradition treaty, provided that the individual would not be subject to the death penalty if convicted of an offense. Finland has ratified the EU Arrest Warrant.

129. (SBU) K: Government officials are not involved in trafficking.

130. (SBU) M: Finland is not a source or destination country for child sex tourism. At least two Finns have been prosecuted for having sex with minors abroad (Estonia and Thailand).

131. (SBU) N: Finland is a signatory to the listed ILO, CRC, and UN conventions.

Protection and Assistance to Victims

132. (SBU) A: Trafficking victims are taken to reception centers for refugees and asylum seekers operated by the Labor Ministry. The system has a capacity for 2,539 persons country-wide, and operates at any point in time at 60%-80% capacity. Two centers have been designated as "preferred" TIP shelters, one in Helsinki and another near the Russian border. TIP victims are housed in separate units within the centers. Finnish reception centers are open (residents can come and go), but visitors are screened by officials and not allowed to contact residents without their consent. Victims receive legal counseling, medical and psychological services, and monthly stipends. Recently, after urging from IOM and other NGOs, the GoF has revised its policy and is now encouraging victims to leave the reception centers as soon as possible for private NGO-run shelters. There are several shelters for victims of domestic abuse that have expanded their services to include counseling and care for trafficking victims. Through February, 8 of the 15 TIP victims identified during the past year were sheltered in a Labor Ministry-run reception center.

133. (SBU) A, cont.: Finnish officials admit that the current system could be improved. The reception centers are clean and well-run, and medical services are adequate, but counseling services remain a work in progress. Psychologists from Finland's national health system have experience with victims of domestic abuse, but little to no experience with trafficking victims. The GoF plans to address this training shortfall this year by pooling resources with other Nordic countries to sponsor a seminar(s) for counselors working with

victims. The language barrier can also be a problem. There are few Chinese or Thai speakers in Finland, and Asian TIP victims may have difficulty communicating with Finnish caregivers. Finally, the open nature of the reception centers can be problematic. Finnish officials do not want to "detain" TIP victims, but several presumed victims left reception centers shortly after arrival and "disappeared" into Finnish society; it is unclear whether they attempted to reconnect with the traffickers that brought them to Finland, left the country on their own, or stayed in Finland as illegal migrants. Dozens of smuggled persons brought to reception centers have also "disappeared" over the past year.

134. (SBU) B: The GoF provides the majority of funding to Finnish NGOs for victim services. The GoF also provides funding to IOM for work inside Finland and elsewhere.

135. (SBU) C: The GoF in early 2006 began to refer and transfer victims from government reception centers to NGO-run shelters whenever possible. This is only done in cases where government and NGO officials believe it is safe and in the best interest of the victim. The IOM Office in Helsinki told the Embassy that after some initial hesitation, the GoF adopted this policy as a "best practice" that is successful in many other countries. Finnish hesitation stems from the country's welfare-state culture that emphasizes the state's role in providing health, social and protective services.

136. (SBU) D: The rights of TIP victims are now generally respected. In the past, the police were quick to arrest and deport foreign prostitutes without screening to identify TIP victims. Law enforcement officials now emphasize the screening process, and Finland intentionally adopted a victim-centered model to eliminate further trauma for possible TIP victims.

137. (SBU) E: The government encourages victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking. Police and prosecutors have an informal system in place to protect victims that cooperate with investigations; the Interior Ministry is currently working on a formal witness protection program.

138. (SBU) F: In addition to the open reception centers described in para 32, the GoF also uses "closed" centers to provide greater protection for persons deemed at-risk. Seven of the 15 TIP victims identified during the reporting period were housed in these secure facilities, including all of the identified minors. The same medical and psychological services described above are available to those in protective custody, but no outside contacts are allowed (other than medical, legal, and consular visits, etc.), and information about residents is protected. Victims who testified at trials would be sheltered in such facilities. Victims in protective custody are not allowed to leave the facility without supervision (if at all). The GoF emphasizes that it uses protective custody arrangements only when absolutely necessary, and that any victims who choose to return to their country of origin will be allowed to do so as soon as arrangements can be made. TIP victims are kept in separate units, and minors are kept in sex-segregated juvenile facilities apart from adults.

139. (SBU) See paras 15,23, and 26 for a description of GoF training initiatives.

140. (SBU) H: There are no known cases of Finnish trafficking victims.

141. (SBU) I: Major NGOs addressing trafficking (in addition to other issues) include: IMO, Finn Church Aid, League of Finnish Feminists, Pro-tukipiste, MonikaNaiset, the Refugee Advice Center, and the National Council of Women in Finland. Several of these NGOs operate shelters that provide assistance and counseling to TIP victims. Pro-tupikiste operates a phone hotline. Some NGOs are also active in demand reduction efforts. All Finnish NGOs receive the bulk of their funding from the GoF. NGOs participated in drafting the National Action Plan and are regularly consulted by the GoF on TIP issues. Most recently, the Labor Ministry has worked with NGOs to develop a referral system to get TIP victims out of government-run reception centers and into NGO shelters whenever possible. NGOs will also participate in an April law enforcement seminar on victim identification.

A Finnish Hero

142. (SBU) Major Ilkaa Herranen of Finland's Frontier Guard has played an instrumental role in influencing Finland's proactive victim-centered approach to combating TIP. There has been a real sea change in official and public attitudes toward trafficking since 2002 in Finland. Many Finns tended to downplay the seriousness of the phenomenon, seeing TIP as a "foreign problem" that didn't occur in or affect Finland. Finnish officials--especially law enforcement officials--generally shared this perspective. Herranen stepped in to help change this. First, he educated himself,

taking advantage of opportunities like EU conference and training seminars and an Embassy-funded IV program to increase his understanding of the problem. Next, he patiently and persistently worked within the system to change the political culture of the law enforcement community. Herranen did this at considerable risk to his career; trafficking was seen as a "soft" issue in law enforcement circles, and some supervisors and colleagues scoffed at his initial attempts to raise TIP's profile. Eventually his work paid off. As more officials were influenced by his growing expertise, and as senior opinion leaders like President Tarja Halonen spoke out against TIP, attitudes changed. Finnish law enforcement today is committed to combating the problem, and Herranen is a big part of the reason why.

143. (SBU) Major Herranen has also influenced public attitudes toward trafficking. Herranen has spoken at literally dozens of seminars, conferences, and smaller meetings, as well as appearing on television news coverage of trafficking. Examples of his public outreach include remarks before the Orthodox and Lutheran Church hierarchies, before Parliament, at several NGO meetings including a roundtable of virtually all Finnish NGOs addressing women's issues, at several schools, and on a major television news magazine's expose of trafficking in the Nordic-Baltic region. Shifting public opinion has enabled policymakers to secure the necessary resources to implement the National Action Plan.

BEST PRACTICES

144. (SBU) Finland's National Action Plan to combat trafficking was adopted in 2005. An inter-agency working group co-chaired by the Labor and Interior Ministries was set up to oversee the NAP's implementation, providing horizontal integration to the process. In addition, the working group required each ministry and agency to draft an "internal action plan" that mirrored the NAP's structure and style. Progress and problems related to the internal plans are regularly reported to the main working group. This formal structural requirement--internal plans for all agencies with equity in the TIP process--has increased agency accountability and compliance, and enhanced the effectiveness of the national-level working group as a coordinating body.

WARE